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ABSTRACT

With reference to the current context of intercultural education in Germany, this paper describes the concept behind a series of specially designed audio-visual media that feature stories and games as the focus of novel forms of presentation. Four audio cassettes and four video films, each with an accompanying explanatory booklet, present Italian and Turkish fairy tales, literary folk heroes, and traditional and modern games and rituals alongside German childlore and literature. The goal of the series is to raise German children's awareness of and openness toward other cultures and languages and, at the same time, to help meet the needs of Italian and Turkish minority children in Germany by strengthening their bilingual/bicultural identity and offering them opportunities to demonstrate their specific skills. Introducing stories and games in ways that convey a message of cultural parity may help to counteract subtle forms of ethnocentrism in everyday settings, to combat negative stereotyping, and to create more complex images of individual cultures. (MDM)

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Stories make a difference: intercultural dialogue in the early years[1]

Summary

Few approaches concerned with issues of cultural and linguistic diversity in the early years have explicitly focussed on children's literature and childlore as a vehicle for initiating and sustaining intercultural dialogue. With reference to the current context of intercultural education in Germany, the paper describes the concept behind a series of specially designed audio-visual media which feature stories and games as the focus of novel forms of presentation. Two cultures and two languages are presented within different kinds of narrative framework. Stories and games are common elements of both peer culture and educational activities across cultures and - suitably presented - may help to foster positive attitudes and matter-of-fact interplay between cultures. The aim is to raise German children's awareness of and openness towards "other" cultures and languages and, at the same time, to help meet the needs of minority children by strengthening their bilingual/bicultural identity and offering them opportunities to demonstrate their specific skills. Introducing stories and games in ways which convey a message of cultural parity may help to counteract subtle forms of ethnocentrism in everyday settings, to combat negative stereotyping, and to create more complex images of individual cultures.

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Current context

In Germany, policy and practice in the field of intercultural education are currently under critical review for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the minority child population is becoming culturally more diverse. One child in nine aged three to six years in the western part of Germany has a non-German family background. Immigrants[2] account for about 8 per cent of the population in unified Germany, with about 1 per cent living in former East Germany. Altogether the minority population rose in numbers from 4.5 million in 1988 to 5.9 million in 1991. Around 40 per cent of the foreign cultural community has been living in the country for over 15 years, and about a quarter for more than 20 years. Predominant groups within the non-German minority population come from Turkey, from former Yugoslavia and from European Community countries. EC members currently account for a quarter and Turkish men, women and children for 30 per cent of the foreign population, whereby numbers in both groups decreased by approximately 3 per cent between 1988 and 1991. During the same period and since, large numbers of ethnic German families (often non-German-speaking) from Poland, Roumania and the former Soviet Union have migrated to Germany, and the number of political refugess, in particular from former Yugoslavia, and of asylum-seekers from African and Asian countries has increased steadily.

A second reason for taking a closer look at intercultural communication in educational settings is one which signifies helplessness in the face of drastic events. Numerous incidents of overt violence towards asylum seekers and in particular a series of horrifying cases of arson against members of the Turkish population have shocked the majority of Germans. Unfortunately, it has taken this extreme situation to heighten public concern about effective ways of combatting racism and violence and educating children for democracy in a multicultural society.

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2 The term "immigrant" is not in common usage in Germany. Members of the non-German population are generally referred to as "foreigners" or "migrants", and officially Germany does not consider itself to be an immigration country.

Thirdly, developments within Europe as a whole, in particular the question of family mobility within the Single Market, are raising questions about the intercultural and European dimension of mainstream education for children of all ages.

Inclusive practice: the development of "common ground"

For many early childhood educators working with children and parents from diverse backgrounds has become a common feature of professional practice. Likewise, group experience with peers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds has become an everyday phenomenon for many German children. More than half the minority child population aged three to six years (54 per cent) attends a kindergarten, which is the major form of group provision for three to six year olds. By comparison, in 1975 this was the case for only 29 per cent of minority children of kindergarten age.

What images and messages are conveyed in these daily encounters? Do children learn an awareness of "differences", and, if so, is this something they feel threatened or stimulated by? Are culturally different modes of expression perceived as something extraordinary, or are they part of an accepted, mainstream peer culture? Questions such as these were the point of departure for our particular approach towards intercultural education in the early years.

Within the Vygotskian model of learning, dialogue is the starting point of thought. This dialogue, or intersubjectivity, between child and adult and between children helps to establish and generate patterns of shared meaning. Reciprocal understanding develops out of joint activity (Vygotsky 1978). This - we could say universal - aim of education, that is, to initiate and sustain dialogue in a meaningful context, is all the more appropriate in culturally mixed groups, where the presence of different languages, signs and symbols may be a barrier preventing the development of "common ground". How can we help establish a sense of uncomplicated, everyday inclusion and acceptance of different cultures and languages among children, parents and educators? We chose to focus on stories and games as common elements of both peer culture and educational activities across cultures. This particular focus sets our work apart from previous approaches within the field.

Working in culturally diverse settings: different approaches in review

An initial wave of educational programmes some ten to fifteen years ago tended to concentrate on the differences between cultures and the problems of minority children. They were seen as a group of children needing compensatory attention, particularly in the field of second-language acquisition. In addition, communication with parents was inevitably described as difficult, if not impossible. As an attempt to increase knowledge and understanding, in-service seminars and training programmes set out to inform educators about social, economic and cultural traditions in the major countries of origin. Research in the field also tended to focus on the individual acculturation difficulties of migrant children, in particular their language and identity problems. In recent years, however, there has been a move away from this deficit philosophy. Under the umbrella term of intercultural education, the positive aspects of cultural pluralism have been stressed, as has the need to educate German children in cultural awareness, tolerance and understanding. An explicitly anti-racist approach, as developed over the last decade in the United Kingdom, which questions negatively discriminating practice in public institutions such as kindergartens and schools, is only just now beginning to receive attention in Germany (Bommes & Radtke, 1993, p.484).

How does our approach fit into this framework? Few, if any of the programmes concerned with cultural and linguistic diversity have explicitly focussed as we have on peer culture and children's literature as a vehicle for initiating and sustaining intercultural dialogue. Our approach should therefore be seen as complementary to these programmes, not as an alternative. Our aims are

- to foster positive attitudes and matter-of-fact interplay between different cultures;
- to raise German children's awareness of and openness towards other cultures and languages in a mainstream setting;
- to help meet the needs of minority bilingual children, to strengthen their bicultural identity, and to offer them institutionally based opportunities to demonstrate their specific skills in a culturally diverse environment.

Children's literature and childlore provide a good starting point for working towards these aims.

Stories and games: creative, reflective and interactive dimensions of intercultural education

Our specific work in the field of intercultural education goes back to the mid-Eighties, when we set up a multicultural resource bank at the Institute. In collaboration with experts in the major countries of origin of migrant families - at that time Turkey, Yugoslavia, Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal - we assembled a collection of children's literature and childlore: fairytales, modern stories, picture-books, traditional games, rhymes, songs, singing games, and a selection of toys and puppets, in particular of culturally significant figures such as Pinocchio or Karagöz. We did not include specifically didactic materials or programmes in formal language instruction. Our interest lies in the creative, reflective and interactive dimensions of children's literature and peer culture.

During a phase of regular cooperation with educators working in kindergarten groups with a high migrant intake, we received valuable feedback on the practicability of a wide range of materials. Following this, we published a selection of stories and games, supplemented by ideas for implementation and follow-up activities in the form of two anthologies for practitioners (Ulich, Oberhuemer & Reidelhuber 1987, 1993).

As a complementary step our recently completed project focussed not on print materials but on audio-visual media.[3] Taking as a reference point the two largest groups within the minority child population, we developed - in close collaboration with artists, film directors and media producers from Turkey and Italy - a series of four audio cassettes and four video films (Ulich & Oberhuemer 1991, 1992). Each of these products is accompanied by an explanatory booklet of about 60 - 80 pages which provides relevant background information, texts in the minority language, and suggestions for practical work. The cassettes present Turkish and Italian fairytales, literary folk heroes, traditional and modern games and rituals alongside German childlore and literature. Our interest lies in creating a supportive and culturally responsive environment for both German and minority children. In kindergartens, children make their first sustained contacts with culturally different people. The

[3] Both projects were funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Science and the Bavarian State Ministry of Education.

attitudes that educators demonstrate concerning acceptance and appreciation of diversity are crucial in this process. Educators sometimes feel particularly challenged when faced with the task of affording children opportunities to participate in culturally and linguistically diverse intergroup relations and activities. In particular they are sometimes unsure when it comes to meeting the needs of bilingual and bicultural children. This insecurity may lead in some cases to a clouded perception of minority children, viewing them as a problem group and losing sight of the many valuable resources that a culturally diverse group offers. We hope to make this task easier, at least in part, by providing attractive materials for generating intercultural dialogue. What are the basic principles underlying our selection and presentation of children's stories and games?

"My turn, your turn" - a basic maxim

One of the titles in our series is "My turn, your turn". The caption signalizes a basic maxim of our approach - a matter-of-fact give and take between cultures. On the cassette in question German and Turkish children exchange counting out rhymes and traditional circle and singing games. One game leads to another, a chain of associations develops into a pleasurable, joint activity. At the same time, both the variety within cultures and the similarities between cultures are demonstrated, thus avoiding a blunt picture of "typical" Turkish games or, conversely, of a diluted, "international" culture.

In a different way, this principle of parity is also demonstrated in a film about a key figure in the Turkish narrative tradition - Nasreddin Hoca. The film starts with a comic duo, a master of ceremonies and his assistant, setting the stage in slapstick fashion for a film show. Three short, anecdotal animation films follow, shown alternately in Turkish and in German - until the film roll snaps while the last film is being shown... A Turkish boy from the audience saves the situation by jumping onto the stage and telling the story in German: an incident which clearly demonstrates the specific skills of bilingual children as a positive role model.

One story - two languages

Language is not only a key factor in communication across cultures, it influences our perception of belonging or not-belonging to a certain cultural group. Among children it is sometimes used as a means of demarcation, of specifying "in groups" and "out groups". Experiencing language diversity is becoming a common feature of socialization not just for minority children but also for monolingual German children, often long before schools start with second language instruction. Developing a positive attitude towards foreign languages has therefore come to be an important mandate for kindergartens. Through the inclusion of elements of a foreign language in the film dialogues and audio presentations we hope to stimulate children's curiosity and receptiveness in this respect. To this purpose we developed new forms of dual language dramatization. Two languages are presented within a single narrative framework. Various types of narrative were developed for this purpose. Examples include a fairytale atmosphere of suspense, a slapstick rendering of communication problems, as in the Nasreddin Hoca film, or a depiction of the tentative steps of a German-Turkish child trying to enter the "strange" world of her father's home culture. Maybe I should stress once again that we are not primarily concerned with systematic language acquisition but with language awareness and cultural enhancement.

On one audio-cassette we hear a dramatized version of a traditional Turkish fairytale. The protagonist is Keloglan, a well-known figure in Turkish folk literature. The story, entitled "Keloglan and the Giant", commences with a narrator announcing that the tale originated in Anatolia and that it will be told in two languages. We hear some characters speaking German, others Turkish. There is no translation but instead a dramatized give and take between two languages. The dialogue is constructed in such a way that German-speaking children can infer from the (German) answer what is being said in Turkish. In addition, the plot and the accompanying acoustic effects help to embed these elements in a meaningful context which engages children's interest and curiosity.

Another example, a film called "Bahar and the Gazelle", dramatizes the theme of "entering new worlds". Bahar Marianne lives in Germany with her Turkish father and German mother. Her father takes her on a visit to Turkey where his sister is to

marry. We see Bahar at her grandmother's house on the day of arrival. She looks estranged and bewildered and resents being talked to in Turkish. While her father is busy greeting relatives and old friends, Bahar slips away, gets lost in the bazaar, and begins to create her "own world" in this strange environment. The film moves onto a fairy-tale level and we meet Bahar's "double", her imaginary friend, who gives her three tasks to complete, as in traditional fairytales. The instructions are in Turkish. Bahar is now involved and active, and she masters all three tasks successfully. Together with her newfound friend she gradually makes her way back to her grandmother's house, joining in a skipping game with other children on the way, and chatting and sharing jokes in Turkish. As Bahar turns to open the door of her grandmother's house, her friend turns away and sets off down the road, waving goodbye until she finally disappears into thin air. Bahar seems disappointed at first. However, she enters the house, dresses up for the wedding, and joins in the family celebrations, smiling, dancing, and - much to her father's amazement - speaking Turkish. We accompany Bahar on her journey of adaptation and reconciliation to the new environment which at first seemed so strange to her. Her phantasy friend is able to help her cope with the "real world".

It is interesting to note that, generally, adults and children tend to react differently to this inclusion of foreign language elements in an otherwise German language presentation. When shown such films for the first time, individual educators are often initially sceptical, whereas (German) children of quite different ages seem to accept the idea as being "normal", not as an intrusion or hindrance. It would seem that children are capable of a "willing suspension of disbelief" on hearing an unknown language within a narrative framework. Educators, on the other hand, may sense a "loss of control", of not being able to understand and explain everything.

Stories and games: images and messages

Stories, games and other forms of cultural expression transmit both collective traditions and individual interpretations of a particular culture. Media which convey these literary and visual images presented in different languages and milieus open up possibilities for minority children both to recognize and to discover elements of their

family heritage without being directly confronted with their specific family situation. The signal given is not the penetrating "How do you do this or that in your family?", but rather: "Here are some good stories that we all like listening to", or "This is a game that we all enjoy playing". This is a message open to interpretation, and a situation which gives the migrant child the chance to react in a specific, culture-bound way without feeling compelled to do so.

Activating parents

Alongside their function in group settings, this kind of material can also help to involve the parents of minority children more directly. Not only do the cassettes signalize that the family's specific cultural heritage is a part of everyday kindergarten activities, they can also be taken home and shared with the family. Hearing a Keloglan tale in kindergarten could be the cue for Turkish children to ask their parents about further Keloglan stories and in this way to stimulate an oral tradition at home. An Italian film showing Pinocchio could lead to a search for different editions of Pinocchio stories and comparing these in the group or having individual stories read aloud by Italian parents in their native language. A film about Nasreddin Hoca may lead to an exhibition of Hoca illustrations and anecdotes and children's paintings on the topic, organised in collaboration with Turkish parents, to which members of the local community are invited. The possibilities are endless. What is important, is that intercultural activities become a matter-of-fact and integral part of the curriculum and are not seen as a "bolt-on" inconvenience (Siraj-Blatchford 1992, p.111) or as something exotic and out-of-the-ordinary.

Evaluative Conclusion

Introducing stories and games in ways which convey a message of cultural parity may help to counteract subtle forms of ethnocentrism in everyday settings. Including foreign language elements within an interesting narrative framework for children is a way of signalizing the presence of other languages as a matter of course. This form of presentation symbolizes equality between a dominant and a minority language, and

it characterizes a familiar situation for bilingual minority children: permanent switching between two languages. Our experiences show that children are generally more willing to accept this switching between two languages than adults. For bilingual children such situations provide a good chance to demonstrate their mediating capacities. Creating a framework for this kind of intercultural dialogue in everyday settings may help to combat negative stereotyping and to create more complex images of individual cultures. Materials selected and presented along these principles are no substitute for race equality measures. They may, however, be a modest but effective part in the multicultural mosaic.

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Personnel in early childhood and out-of-school provision: Training and job profiles
- A survey in the EC countries -

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Aims and context of project

The project aims to detail information on pre-school and out-of-school provision in the member states of the European Community. It focuses in particular on the

initial training and job profiles

of qualified personnel working with children from birth to 14 years in settings outside the compulsory school system, i.e.

- education and daycare provision for children from birth to statutory school age;
- out-of-school education and daycare arrangements for school children up to the age of 14.

The EC single market represents a new framework for family and worker mobility. A helpful step towards using and extending the possibilities for worker mobility is knowledge about the different training systems and fields of work. The planned comprehensive survey hopes to provide a database and frame of reference for exchange and co-operation in the pre-school and out-of-school education and daycare sectors.

Besides the *formal* recognition of qualifications detailed information is needed which describes the structure and *content* of staff training programmes and the actual job requirements of educators in pre-school and out-of-school education and daycare settings. This database should be a valuable source for administrators, for staff working in pre-service and in-service training, for practitioners, for researchers, and for employers - not only in Germany, but also in other EC countries.

Content focus

The survey will focus on the following areas of pre-school and out-of-school educational and daycare provision:

(1) Training system and training programmes for personnel
e.g. administrative framework of training; entrance requirements for courses; structure, aims and content of courses; examination syllabus; formal qualification; accrediting body; possible fields of work.

(2) Job descriptions and professional development profiles
e.g. workplace requirements; system of in-service education; status and salary scales; possiblities for promotion; recruitment and retention of staff; fluctuation; possibility of work in related fields.

(3) Provision: institutions and settings
e.g. administrative framework; age of children; structure of groups; adult-child ratio; educational aims, curriculum, programme policy; personnel; parent participation;

Procedure

One of the first tasks will be to build up a *network of experts* in each country: this step is an important prerequisite for the success of the study. Important contact persons for this particular project are:

- the national ministries and local authorities and bodies responsible for the administration and delivery of pre-school and out-of-school services;
- representatives of key training institutions and authorising bodies;
- researchers in the field of early childhood education and out-of-school provision;
- practitioners with regional responsibility;
- professional organisations.

Alongside reference to EC-guidelines and recommendations and to pioneer cross-national surveys and compilations which focus in part on the concerns of this survey (CEC 1988, 1990; ATEE 1991), an important task will be to collect and evaluate pertinent *national documents and reports*:

- national (or regional) *legislation, guidelines and policy documents* on the training and job profiles of workers in pre-school and out-of-school settings;
- descriptions of *training programmes* and *qualifications*; examples of course and examination syllabi, etc.;
- *statistics* relating to staff training, recruitment, fluctuation; reports on and analyses of the training and deployment of educators.

In addition to document analysis, *interviews* will be carried out in each country with experts in the field.

Perspectives

The findings of the project will be made available to all EC member states. Envisaged is a reference-type publication as well as comparative reports and analyses which draw out common and individual issues and developments. European networks in common areas of interest are on the increase. This particular project addresses a wide range of issues in the field of early childhood and out-of-school education and day care provision and may well open up avenues for future collaborative projects.